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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
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TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: Ki-Moon Visit, Occupied Golan, Syria/Russia, Iraq, Lebanon,
Palestinian Territories (5/26)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Apr. 26 reported a televised interview by al-Jazeera TV on Apr. 25 of Information Minister Dr. Mohsen Bilal, who described President Asad's meeting with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon as positive and fruitful. "Syria

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Ki-Moon's visit to Damascus a positive and wise step," Bilal said. Regarding the Lebanese situation, Dr. Bilal said that President Asad has underlined that Lebanese civil peace and national agreement, and implementation of the Lebanese constitution, are the true and main bases to protect Lebanon. Bilal pointed out that Ki-Moon touched upon the issue of the peace process in the region, showing support for the Arab peace initiative and expressing readiness to cooperate with Syria to achieve stability and a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Papers also reported that Syrian prisoners from the occupied Golan in Israeli jails called on the United Nations to work hard to help them, to stop criminal Israeli practices against them and to exert serious efforts for their release. The Syrian people of occupied Golan stressed that the martyrdom of the Syrian prisoner Hail Abu Ziyed is clear and conclusive evidence of deliberate negligence by Israeli jails.

On Syrian-Russian relations, papers reported that Syrian Prime Minister Otri reviewed on Apr. 25 with Russia's Regional Development Minister, Vladimir Yakovlev, cooperation and historical friendly relations between the two countries and means of boosting and expanding prospects for the achievement of their mutual interests in all different domains. The sides discussed issues and topics that were reviewed by the Syrian-Russian joint committee for trade, scientific and technical cooperation.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"A message from the Golan people to the UN Secretary General calling for releasing their prisoners in Israeli jails" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/26)

"Jeajea brags about assassinating Rashid Karami. Lebanese opposition calls for scheduling the crime on the schedule of the investigation committee on the al-Hariri assassination" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/26)

"The Olmert government unleashes its premeditated aggression against Gaza" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/26)

"Israeli occupation threatens to attack Hanieh's residence. Olmert gives his orders to the Israeli army for a harsh response in Gaza in retaliation for firing rockets at Israel" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/26)

"Extensive Iraqi rejection of the Al-A'zamiyah wall" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/26)

"Congress summons Rice to testify on justifications of war on Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/26)

"Democrats call for bringing Cheney to trial as a prelude to his ouster" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/26)

"The European Parliament calls for deposing Wolfowitz" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/26)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Who Is the Aggressor?"

Umar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishrin, wrote (4/26): "Israel was the party that violated the truce with Palestinians through its attacks, arrests, assassinations, and incursions into West Bank cities...."

"The occupation remains the source of the problem.... It is the right of those who suffer from injustice to defend themselves. In this case, it is the Palestinian people who are suffering injustice in their land and country. Their rights are being trampled upon every day before the eyes and ears of the world, which should pay attention to the true situation in the occupied Arab territories and tell the Israeli aggressor: enough is enough...."

"Boycott Is a Sheathed Weapon"

Hanan Hamad, a commentator in government-owned Tishrin, wrote (4/26): "During the current meetings in Damascus by the liaison officers of the Arab bureaus on the boycott of Israel, these bureaus failed to implement the recommendations of their recent conferences and lost their ability to resist the pressure that the West has applied to end the boycott, on the pretext of settling the Arab-Israeli conflict.... Currently there is talk about the possibility of forming an expanded Arab team to hold talks with Israel to promote the Arab peace plan. That would be an attempt to place the cart before the horse...."

"What is more painful is the sheathing of the boycott weapon while the Palestinian people are still suffering from the unjust siege, not only the international siege, but also the siege that prevents the arrival of funds that the sons of the Arab nation collected to support their brothers in Palestine...."

"Where Are Things Heading in Lebanon?"

Salim Abbud, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (4/26): "The situation in Lebanon grows tenser and graver by the

day, and the growing interferences by the US Administration and some European forces, headed by France, threaten to push Lebanon into a dark tunnel...

"The 14 February forces in Lebanon are unleashing their hatred toward Syria and the Lebanese resistance to serve the American-Israeli plan in the region....

"The government team in Lebanon wants the international court on the al-Hariri assassination to be established under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter so as to punish the nationalists and pan-Arabists in Lebanon and the region and turn Lebanon into an arena for international influence in which Israel and the United States will be the main players...."

"Policies of Segregation and Fragmentation"

Mihriz al-Ali, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (4/26): "The American plan is to build concrete walls around Al-A'zamiyah and other Iraqi regions.... This US plan, that reminds us of the Israeli racial segregation policy, aims at fragmenting Baghdad and undermining national unity as a prelude to dividing Iraq and turning its regions into sectarian cantons to entrench hostility among the sons of one people.... This is part of the bigger American plan to divide and fragment the region....

"US war advocates are entangled between failure and illusive victory. They are deceiving themselves if they think that walling off Baghdad serves them or the Iraqis and that their widely-denounced policy is victorious. Concrete walls cannot save Americans from further fatal involvement and will not bring security and stability...."

Corbin